

Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency Interoperable Communications Meeting Tuesday, October 1, 2013

In Attendance:

Members:

Jamia McDonald - Exec. Director of RIEMA
Sam Adams - Department of Health
Gina Caruolo - Department of Corrections
Norma Sousa - E-911
Peter Ginaitt - Lifespan
Joseph McGarry - Prov. Communications
James McLaughlin - Fire Chiefs Association
Sid Wordell - Police Chiefs Association
Tony Lupinacci - Department of Information Technology
Dawn Lewis - HARI
Brian Glancy - Rep. of RIEMA
Tom Crotty - Rhode Island State Police
Ralph Nahigian - RISCON North
Thom Guertin - SWIC
Jamie Pereira - RIPTA
Joe Baker - Department of Transportation

Guests:

Jeff Reilly - MutuaLink
John Washburn - RIEMA
Brian Swann - Motorola Solutions
Tom Guthlein - RIEMA
Melinda Hopkins - RIEMA
Gil Woodside - RIEMA
Alex Potts - RIEMA
Scott Lessard - North Kingstown Fire
David Schnell - Lifespan
Joseph DelGuidice - Prov. Communications

October 1, 2013 - Minutes:

10:03 called to order and reviewing minutes, roll call was done, there was a quorum.
Dawn Lewis (HARI) motion to accept minutes as written, seconded by Joe Baker (Department of Transportation), minutes accepted as written.

FirstNet moved to next month due to Federal Government shutdown.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

Tom Guthlien (RIEMA) sent out a portion of the SOPs to members and has received comments; at the next meeting he will have a list of all questions and answers. Will have all three sets out for comments.

Once internal review is completed, members can take back to their organization for feedback and for a 30 day review period.

These are living documents and they are made to be changed. Sam Adams (Department of Health) stated he was thrilled to see this getting done; he asked when we get the more procedural Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are we going to convene a group to establish the best practices? The fifth set will discuss these. Tom Guthlien (RIEMA) requested that anyone with a communications plan to send them to him for review.

Sam Adams (Department of Health) stated that as we get the subcommittees set up, do we get these out to them for review? Because it is at a user level we may want to put a working group together for the particular set of SOPs; police, fire, and hospital, just to review.

Chief Wordell (Police Chiefs Association) stated as we move forward, we need to get the first responders in the procedure.

Some of the SOPs that are already approved will be used as the new communities are brought on and are test running them, and will also be using them as guidelines of how we are doing things. Peter Ginaitt (Lifespan) asked as new communities are coming on are we looking to limit to first responders or are we looking to expand, what they have and why they need it? John Washburn (RIEMA) stated that they are doing a full assessment. If they are using VHF and are looking at what is more cost effective instead of operational, what happens if they abandon the system to go to 800 Mhz? We should not get locked in that 800 Mhz is the only operational system. Our focus is interoperability, regardless of system. We will test run a decision process with a department that is considering converting to 800 Mhz and say this is what was looked at, this is what is used, and here is what we recommend.

Ralph Nahigian (RISCON North) In some of the SOPs there are things not currently being done and some need to change, it may require reprogramming a radio, or purchasing new equipment, how is that going to work?

Tom Guthlein (RIEMA) is charged with updating the SCIP. The SCIP is a 5 year projection of interoperable communications. It may be a financial burden. Sam Adams (Department of Health) mentions the per unit cost, just because RIEMA gave the radio, doesn't mean they are on the hook for all the updates on that piece of equipment. Or when EMA puts up the EMPG or SHSP money we put in what kind of equipment and technology we require.

In the SOPs please put that kind of feedback in there when reviewing.

It is not a mandate to any community to come on, in EMAs role we should have good service, stable system and an option for community to choose from.

Subcommittees

There are 5 subcommittees and 5 people interested. The following are the chairs of the aforementioned subcommittees:

Technical Subcommittee – Brian Glancy
Budget and Capital Subcommittee – Chief Sid Wordell
Compliance & Customer Service Subcommittee – Sam Adams
Training and Education Subcommittee – Deputy Chief James McLaughlin
Policy Subcommittee – Colonel Christopher Callahan

Jamia McDonald (Exec. Director of RIEMA) opened up for feedback.

Peter Ginaitt (Lifespan) made a motion to accept the subcommittee chairs, seconded by Joe McGarry (Prov. Communications), all accepted, motion approved. Jamia McDonald (Exec. Director of RIEMA) will set up meeting with chairs.

Jamia McDonald (Exec. Director of RIEMA) mentioned that this is Joe McGarry's (Prov. Communications) last meeting before retirement and would like to congratulate him and wish him all the best. Joe McGarry (Prov. Communications) said a few words; he stated this committee has been one of the best committees he had ever been on. There is so much help between the departments it is great. Thank you.

New Business

Moratorium on activating new units on the system continues, Department of Health has a new cache of radios and wants to know when to put them on. Ralph Nahigian (RISCON North) remarked lots of departments come to us wanting to see how 800 Mhz works; Smithfield Police Department is asking to get on. I don't want to give them wrong information, if anyone has questions give them to John Washburn (RIEMA) and they can speak with him. RIEMA are speaking with Smithfield Police Department. Chief Wordell (Police Chiefs Association) stated that we've had discussions at Police Chiefs Association on this issue. It's not so much how does this work, how does that work, it's how long is it going to work. In the past we didn't have people to discuss these issues with or ask questions. One thing now, to the credit of the Exec. Director, is getting people in there that are able to help with these questions. You have the perspective on where we've come from, where we have been, and where we are going. Dawn Lewis (HARI) mentioned that since we are beginning a new vetting process we should have a consistent message when others ask questions so we can direct them appropriately.

Jamia McDonald (Exec. Director of RIEMA) stated that at next month's meeting we can lay out the initial process for vetting new users and what that would look like. Peter Ginaitt (Lifespan) asked if the goal was for the application to check boxes to say they have met certain criteria.

Jamia McDonald (Exec. Director of RIEMA) stated that is part of the intent as well as determining whether it is a good business decision. The original application should give the number of units they are asking to put on, so they can't put more radios than they asked for. At some point, we may have to consider a user fee.

Joe McGarry (Prov. Communications) asked about a formal training plan before anyone comes on. James McLaughlin (Fire Chiefs Association) stated that the police may be better situated at that currently; and will continue to work with the fire side.

Tom Guthlein (RIEMA) stated we were discussing communications plans, watching people's exercises and testing communication interoperability. The biggest gap RIEMA has found is after previous exercises the After Action Reports identify communications as an issue, but they don't specify the problem.

During Operations Safe Haven, Sam Adams (Department of Health) stated that not one agency could talk to each other with a RISON radio and it delayed emergency medical services 12.

Sam Adams (Department of Health) stated that on the ICS-205 some requested to use southwide 6. Gil Woodside (RIEMA) said there is no southwide 6 on the fleet map. The radios are not all programmed the same. At this time Jamia McDonald (Exec. Director of RIEMA) introduced Alex Potts (RIEMA). He is new to RIEMA's Communications Division, Alex is helping Gil with these issues, particularly the programming and exercise issues raised.

Joe McGarry (Prov. Communications) stated that he has been on this system for 10 years and we have always had issues working outside our territory. There should be a communications leader at all big events.

Sam Adams (Department of Health) suggested that some people around this table could be used as evaluators for these exercises. Dawn Lewis (HARI) suggested we create an evaluator protocol so we are just capturing the communications issues specifically for RISON. Gina Caroulo (Department of Corrections) stated that Corrections uses the HSEEP standardized forms for evaluation.

Jamia McDonald (Exec. Director of RIEMA) asked for any additional issues.

Joe McGarry (Prov. Communications) stated that there are two other committees that some of us sit on. Region 19 FCC; a meeting in December is coming up and has open appointments that RIEMA has on it. It is a good network.

Regional Communications Committee; which meets in Maynard, Massachusetts twice a year. The SWIC in Rhode Island has appointments to that Committee.

Joe Baker (Department of Transportation) provided an updated on Department of Transportation. They are utilizing \$500,000 in federal funding to do final build out for their communications system. He is working with RIEMA on this already. By spring they are looking to have a new system installed and in operation. He wants to thank Jack Landers and Department of

Information Technology, as we are migrating to Verizon wireless from Sprint Nextel. We appreciate the help with that Jack.

Brian Glancy (Rep. of RIEMA) added on to what Tom Guthlein stated about our new SOPs. He looked at the SOPs and has responded to all of them. Nothing falls outside what was cited in the DHS report. It is all very much on point in terms of where we need to go. There are pluses in there that clears up the areas of concern. I'd like to give Tom Guthlein, John Washburn and Gil Woodside credit for their hard work.

Jamia McDonald (Exec. Director of RIEMA) also stated, in follow up to a question, that Committee members do not need to be members of the ICC as long as the chair is a member of the ICC.

Summary

Subcommittees are set up, Jamia McDonald (Exec. Director of RIEMA) will set a meeting with each chair.

Follow-ups for next month:

- SCIP
- Budget update
- Process for vetting

Peter Ginaitt (Lifespan) asked when subcommittees are organized can RIEMA send out to the full ICC.

Peter Ginaitt (Lifespan) motioned to adjourn, seconded by Joe McGarry (Prov. Communications), all approved meeting adjourned at 11:06 AM.

Next Meeting tentatively scheduled for November 5th 10:00 AM.